

A PhilNews Publication

# SCOUTING PARADISE

SUMMER 2022

**Be Negative, Stay Positive**  
Crews resume trek after  
quarantine in the backcountry

**Celebrating 50 Years of**  
Women and Academy Rangers

**Ready. Set. Go.**  
Cooks Peak Fire reinforces the  
importance of land management

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# TABLE OF

# CONTENTS

FOLLOWING THEIR PATH	4
BE NEGATIVE, STAY POSITIVE	8
A PEEK UNDER THE HOOD	10
50 YEARS OF ACADEMY RANGERS	16
READY. SET. GO.	20
A SCOUT IS HELPFUL	26
KIDS AND KIN	28
WOMEN. SCOUTS. TRAILBLAZERS.	30
THE MAGIC OF THE RAYADO RIVER	34

## WE THANK YOU

Philmont's legacy is rooted in generations of participants and staff passing down their hard-earned wisdom and fostered love to those next in line. For the first time since 2017, Philmont was able to operate its life-changing programs for a consecutive year in 2022. The result was a backcountry that sprung to life ready to deliver wilderness and learning adventures that last a lifetime.

The stories recounted to family and friends upon our staff and participants' return home are filled with adversity, triumph and good company. It is perhaps the most difficult aspect of the Philmont experience: trying to explain it to those who have never been.

Our great privilege is to attempt to do just that: capturing the stories of lives being changed at Philmont and sharing them with the Scouting community. We thank all who took the time to share a piece of themselves, engage with our team and trust our vision for documenting the magic.

- 2022 Marketing and Photography Services

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# Following their

# PAA TH

50 years of  
women in  
the Ranger  
Department  
shines  
a light on  
progress and  
the trail  
ahead

By Jarod Contreras



Catherine Hendricks gives a trailhead talk to her crew instructing scouts on map and compass skills on July 14, 2022. Photo By Emily Schmidt.



**Top Left:** Women at Philmont celebrate on Baldy Mountain. / 1970s

**Top Right:** Nadine Richardson, left, embraces Kate Warrick, right, as she arrives back into base camp after leading a Rayado crew for 21 days in the backcountry on July 9, 2021. Photo By Marielle Scott. / 2021

**Middle:** From left, Logan Hardin, Sarah Cobb, and Rebecca Wiebke sit in the meadow enjoying the tall grass and warm sunlight. Photo By Lex Selig. / 2016

**Bottom Left:** Nancy Wells poses with her crew in the summer of 1972. Wells is one of the first female rangers of Philmont Scout Ranch. / 1972

**Bottom Right:** Catherine Hendricks smells a ponderosa pine while on trail on July 14, 2022. Photo By Emily Schmidt. / 2022



In the summer of 1972, two women, Nancy Wells and Kathy Leach, stepped onto Philmont Scout Ranch and made history: they became the first female rangers. Now, 50 years later, women serving as rangers have formed a legacy of leadership and excellence inextricably tied to the positive reputation Philmont holds in so many minds. That legacy has shaped the lives of many, especially one of the first female rangers: Nancy Wells.

Wells' relationship with Philmont began long before her summer on staff. She had visited the Ranch with her family a couple of times growing up. When her father and brother went on trek, she said she remembers thinking how cool that was. Wells was a Girl Scout and had a passion for camping and backpacking. In 1969, when the BSA opened Exploring to girls, Wells applied. "I want to be a Boy Scout," Wells said.

Soon after being accepted into the Exploring program, she applied to Philmont when she was 17. Unfortunately, she received a "very nice letter" back from the Ranch that said Philmont wasn't "ready for girls," even though the Exploring program was.

"I thought, 'Okay, I'll give you guys a year to get ready,'" Wells said.

So, she applied in 1970, and in 1971 and in 1972. Four years in a row, Philmont told Wells the same thing: the Ranch was not ready for women. Finally, in the spring of 1972 Wells received a phone call: the Ranch changed its mind, it was ready for girls.

"I'm probably the drip that started the flood," Wells said about all the women who followed.

Wells was not alone that summer. Her fellow female ranger was Kathy Leach.

Leach's brothers had all worked at Philmont, however, none of them ever worked in the Ranger Department. She, herself, had worked nearby at the girls' camp, Cimarroncita. One day, the Ranch called Leach explaining they had a female ranger, asking if Leach would be the second. Leach said she has no idea if she was the first call or the 10th, but she said yes. She became one of two of the first female rangers.

"What does Philmont mean to me? It's one giant door that leads to an incredible world of discovery, and it can be a discovery of so many things. But the one that speaks to me, especially about young women, is they learn they are more than they thought they were," Leach said.

When that door opened for Leach in the summer of 1972, she said she found precious wilderness and a culture founded on growth and learning. However, she also found pushback.

"My first year we had a group summit on Baldy," Leach said. "All the rangers broke out of their training groups, and we all hiked Baldy. It was fun. It was neat to see everybody climbing up there. As I got to the top, I heard this voice say, 'Oh no' as I showed up, and I hoped that would never happen again."

Leach said she is discouraged hearing that, after all these years, there are still remnants of the boys' club that exclaimed "oh no."

Katie Horn, one of the two Rayado trek coordinators this summer, described a moment in 2021 when she was a ranger trainer. A crew approached her to ask how she felt about women

joining the department "in the last few years". Horn said she could not believe that the crew had not realized that women didn't begin working at Philmont after the BSA opened to girls in 2019 but instead had been at Philmont for decades.

"It feels like I have to be on all the time to show all of the Rayado women rangers and participants that women can endure at Philmont. Women can endure in Scouting. I get to be that person [who] leads the way," Horn said.

Horn described the feeling that sometimes being a woman at Philmont feels like being a zoo animal. She thinks the crews that actively don't want a female ranger must assume that women aren't as strong. Horn said she hopes that by sharing that being a woman at Philmont sometimes means being singled out, she can help crews come to the Ranch hoping not "for a male, they'll just come in hoping for a ranger."

"I think there's a lot of unconscious bias that occurs in the world. These advisors [who] are asking questions or making comments about us being women might not even realize the impact of their words," Horn said.

Horn reinforced the importance of sharing this side of the experience because it builds camaraderie. She described feeling responsible, that she was doing something wrong, for the comments early in her Philmont career. But, by talking with fellow female rangers, she realized that many experience the same: that it isn't her fault.

"I think we have to talk about it because they need to be called out, and not everyone has the courage to call out someone in the moment," Horn said.

Both Leach and Horn reinforced that Philmont has nevertheless made great strides, and they hope to see that

progress continue.

"I was ecstatic when we got to our conservation site, and there were women crew members working for cons. I was bouncing off the clouds. It was just so exciting, and they were so fun. It just created a great experience for our trek," Leach said about her experience as an advisor on trek in 2013. "That was almost more exciting than having a female ranger. I got the sense that maybe acceptance for women was growing."

Going forward, Wells, Leach and Horn reinforced the importance of increasing women's presence at Philmont. Increasing female participant participation will lead to an increased presence of women on staff.

Horn illustrated the importance of supporting those women once they come on staff. Providing the voices, guidance and leadership of fellow women as a support network to assuage the self-doubt she has seen in so many of her female colleagues.

Leach described the need for increasing the visual representation of women across the Ranch. Leach said a fellow female ranger once said while the Scout Law can take you pretty far, adding "tolerance, respect and compassion" is a needed step.

"I look at the role of the woman Ranger, and what she can do, and the power of that position, and she just blows me away," Leach said. "My heart belongs to the Ranger Department, and it always will."

# “I WANT TO BE A BOY SCOUT”

Crew 613-J2 returns to the trail after getting dropped off at Clarks Fork on June 23, 2022.



# Be Negative, Stay Positive

CREWS RESUME TREK AFTER  
QUARANTINE IN THE  
BACKCOUNTRY

Photos and Story By Jack Rodgers

After summiting Baldy Mountain, a feeling of elation many participants come to know on trek, crew 613-J2 from Santa Barbara, California encountered an unexpected challenge. A few of their crew members had tested positive for COVID-19.

As COVID-19 continues to present challenges to the ranch, 613-J2 is one of 38 crews as of July 20 that have had to improvise and adapt their backcountry experience.

When 613-J2 crew members tested positive for COVID-19, a layer of uncertainty fell over them on day five of their trek. “It was kind of a little bit of a shock for all of us,” said crew leader Alex Muller. “We all seemed healthy right before the trip. We all tested.”

Crew members who test positive for COVID-19 isolated at basecamp, while the rest of the crew quarantined at Herradura. Crews quarantine at Herradura for five days before they can resume their trek, if no one else tests positive for the COVID-19 virus.

To help mitigate the spread of COVID-19 at the Ranch, starting July 1, Philmont required everyone who visited the Ranch to show a negative COVID-19 test three days before arrival. Additionally, everyone must wear a mask both at basecamp and in the backcountry unless they are with only their crew.

Crew 613-J2 wasted no time making the most of their situation. “It was a really beautiful area where we were at,” Muller said. “Even if we were not going to be backpacking from camp to camp, we were still going to have an enjoyable time.” Philmont allows crews at Herradura to do a number of activities to keep their trek going. Crews can day hike between six to ten miles to highlights such as Lover’s Leap, Stone Wall Pass, Urraca Mesa, Inspiration Point and Tooth of Time. They can go fishing at the Philmont Reservoir and complete the conservation hours required to earn the Arrowhead Patch.

While at the camp, crews can also play football, frisbee, cornhole and other games in the shadow of the Tooth of Time.



Crew 613-J2 engages in a pull-up competition at Clarks Fork after returning to the trail on June 23, 2022.



Crew 613-J2 celebrates the completion of their trek at closing campfire on June 24, 2022.

613-J2 took advantage of their opportunity to summit the Tooth of Time. With the addition of Baldy Mountain on day four of their trek, standing on top of both iconic peaks marks an accomplishment few crews can list on their resume.

“We were thrown lemons and these guys seriously made good lemonade out of it. Every single day,” said advisor Nancy Schley. “While it was really raining, it was cold and there was nothing to do, these guys gathered under that tarp [dining fly] and they bonded amazingly. They sang songs and came up with jokes. Those guys are special.”

Crew 613-J2 is from Troop 26, which has always been very active and supportive of challenging outdoor pursuits, according to Schley. Having watched them grow up in the troop, she witnessed development in them unlike anything else in prior Scouting experiences. “When we did roses, thorns and buds, as well as our devotionals, these guys went deep,” Schley said. “They take it really seriously ... the things that were coming out were really profound; I grew from a lot of stuff they had and to say and I think they grew from each other.”

When the crew’s five-day quarantine was completed with no more positive cases, the crew reunited with their final member who isolated at basecamp for five days. “We were all really excited to see him,” Muller said. “He brought a lot of life to the crew, everyone brings life, but he brought a different type of vibe. Everyone was super excited to see him, and it was nice to be finally reunited with him on the trail.”

Over the course of their stay at Herradura, the crew adopted a motto: “Be negative, stay positive”. Negative in relation to a COVID-19 test and positive in relation to their attitude. “Enjoy every moment to the fullest,” he said. “You just want to embrace it all.” With their quarantine complete, 613-J2 resumed their trek at Clark’s Fork, where they rode horses and crossed Tooth Ridge before descending back into basecamp.

For a crew that had been restricted to one camp for five days, the 10+ mile hike was a welcomed challenge to finish their experience strong. “There’s a lot of amazing that happened,” said Schley. “For anybody to be disappointed ... Philmont’s amazing.”

# A Peek Under the Hood





Michael Martinez loads hay bales in the hay wagon on July 11, 2022. The hay wagon follows behind the balers, loading bales as it is driven.

For those who  
**keep Philmont  
running,** it's  
more than the  
job.

By Jarod Contreras  
Photos By Chris Nye

“I’m old and senile, but I’m cute, so it makes up for it, I hope,” said Kenny Martinez as he described the difficulty of operating old-school pump-action grease guns compared to new-school automatic ones. Martinez works in the Farm and Roads Department, a department that works behind the scenes of what Philmont is known for. They maintain the network of roads that web the Ranch’s camps together, they farm feed for Philmont’s livestock, they help brand cattle, maintain equipment and otherwise keep Philmont running.

Along with departments such as Maintenance and Motor Pool, Farm and Roads plays a special role on the ranch: if they’re doing their job right, participants and even staff don’t often notice that they exist. Spending the day behind the scenes reinforces that Philmont is a *working* ranch, just as Waite Phillips intended. It is a livelihood of manual labor, whether that be with livestock, the maintenance of facilities or with the farming of crops. It is a life on the land for a handful of those lucky enough to call this corner of northeast New Mexico home all year-round.

#### IT’S THE SIMPLE LIFE

As storm clouds brewed above the Tooth of Time and the sun beat down on fields of hay, I came upon a handful of men greasing tractors, balers and other such farm equipment. As Martinez told me later, it’s vital to grease your equipment because, “everything on a tractor’s a million bucks,” but, “grease is cheap.”

As handshakes and names were shared, I saw that the men of Farm and Roads were quick to joke and quick to smile. Perhaps I had made new friends, but I had at least definitely been invited into the circle of camaraderie that these men share working day after day on vast fields and rugged roads.

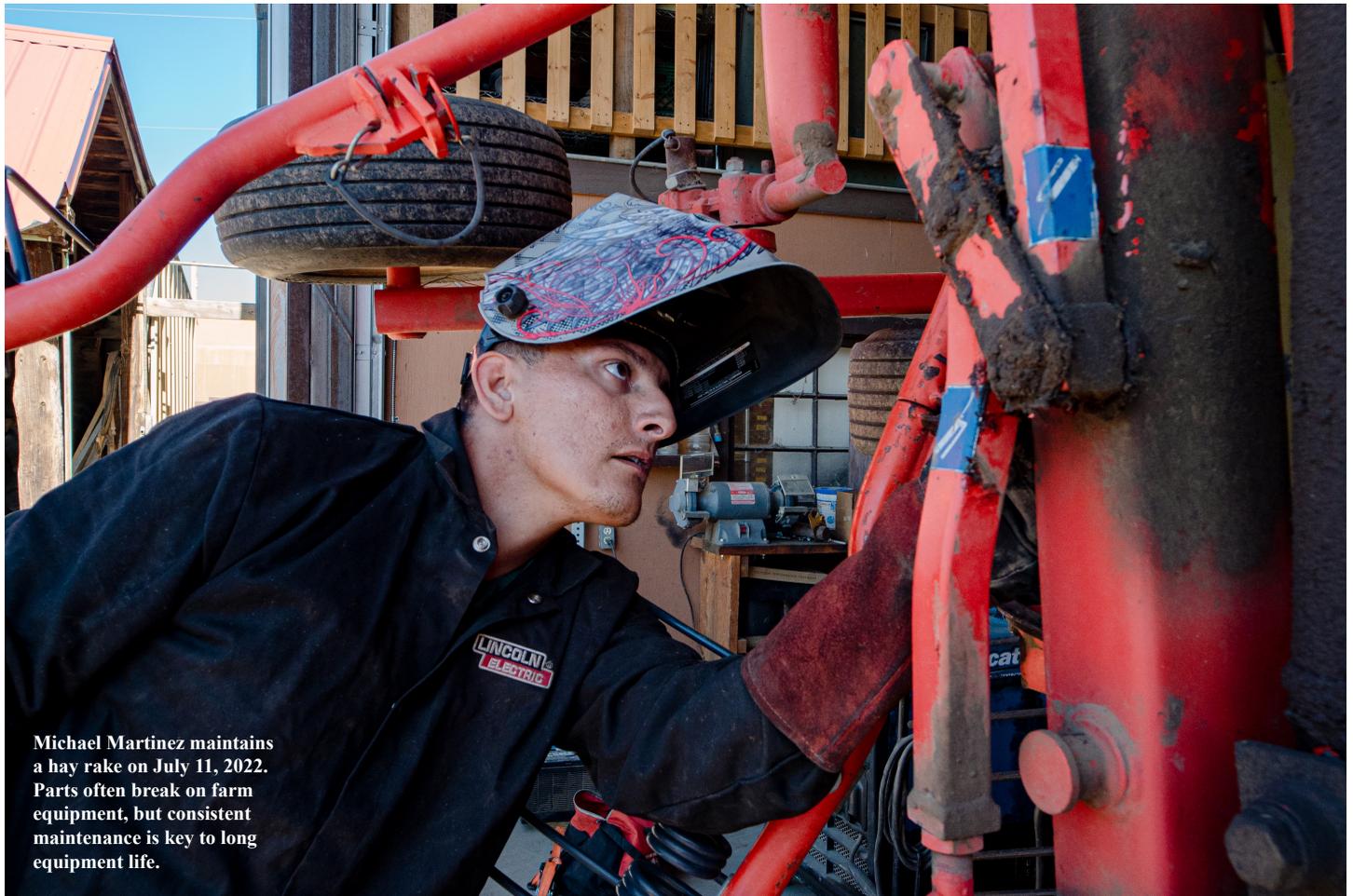
I learned that a hay baler is, as most farm equipment is, a deceptively simple, ingenious machine. Pulling hay aligned by the hay rake, an entirely different, equally ingenious machine, into its mechanism, the baler can compress, flip and tie a bale, depositing the bale onto the field behind as the tractor continues to pull along.

“Soon you’ve got a bale popping out the back faster than a chicken with its head cut off,” Martinez said.

As the storm moved in closer, the men of Farm and Roads each hopped in to drive a different machine and rolled off to bale the hay from the west field. I too hopped into the cab of a tractor, positioning myself awkwardly above the controls as Eric Aguilar, a new hire to the department who started last year, drove.

As we circled the field, Aguilar illustrated what life in the department is like. Aguilar told me that, “it’s the simple life.”

He said he treasures the moments when, as he works the fields, small animals pop their heads up out of the dirt in curiosity and then quickly duck back in as the heavy machinery trucks along. He told me that he cherishes being away from the crowds of basecamp and that his solitude out in nature is important to him. He warned me that sometimes, just sometimes, snakes get baled, too. That you’ll come across a bale with a rattle poking up out of it or a gaping maw reaching out to bite you fast. It’s the simple things that matter, he reinforced.



Michael Martinez maintains a hay rake on July 11, 2022. Parts often break on farm equipment, but consistent maintenance is key to long equipment life.



Michael Martinez stacks hay at Philmont Scout Ranch on July 11, 2022. Unloading the hay wagon is a technical process requiring training.

## LIGHTING A SPARK

The simple side of life, a hard day's work out in nature, draws many to the departments that keep Philmont running. Curtis Seifert, who works in the Maintenance department, is a Senior Maintenance Technician and the Ponil Ranger, meaning he lives year-round out at Ponil. In a conversation in Seifert's shop, surrounded by 80-year-old window frames that he was in the process of repairing and tools stacked high, Seifert described to me why he's grateful for his position and life out at Ponil.

"You can light a spark with any participants out here but with seasonal staff you can light a fire with three months out here," Seifert said.

Seifert only recently moved with his family, including his wife Jessica Seifert who works in the Ranching Department, out to Ponil. However, he is already embracing connecting with the seasonal staff he lives next door to. He sees his job as both a maintenance technician who services a wide array of problems across the Ranch but also as a guide to the young people he engages with.

"Do dangerous things carefully and that's how you're going to grow," Seifert said when I asked him what the biggest piece of advice he has for both seasonal staff and participants.

The biggest impression I took away from my conversation with Seifert is that he is a very intentional man. I have found that

with many of the staff members of these departments. They may have been hired to repair plumbing, fix cabins or farm fields but they take it beyond their direct job duties. They are involved in the fire department, search and rescue or they take the time to positively influence participants and staff, and often all of the above and much more.

Seifert laid out materials he had collected and photocopied from the National Scouting Museum for our conversation. Materials that told the history of Ponil, of the buildings there and of Ponil's role as basecamp early in Philmont's history. Seifert described how, for him, the job was far more than sanding wood or installing plumbing, it was an opportunity to connect with the land, the history and the people.

He described a moment recently when he was renovating a wall inside his house, which was built in 1940. He found a signature with pristine penmanship inside the wall that said, "Pat 1940". Before putting the wall back together, Seifert told me he spent that evening having a drink with Pat, who is long dead by now, and reflecting on what it means to work and live at Philmont. What it means to make it count out here.

When describing all that we have available, for adventure and for personal growth, here on the Ranch Seifert told me, "we're drowning when others would sell their leg for a drop of water."

# "IT WAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO CONNECT WITH THE LAND, THE HISTORY AND THE PEOPLE"





Rayado Return / Zoë Cranfill



Gold Panning / Ryan Moore



Rayado Chicken / Ryan Ash



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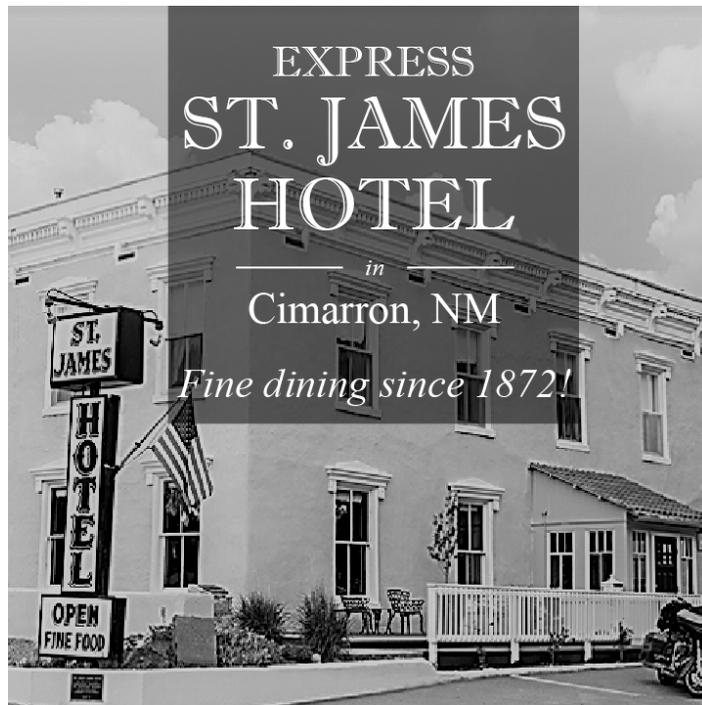
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Academy Rangers pose for a photo in front of the Tooth of Time.



For 50 years Philmont's Service Academy program has seen cadets and midshipmen of the United States' military academies arrive at the Ranch for a three-week leadership experience. Stepping out of a military context, Philmont provides these cadets and midshipmen with the opportunity to develop their leadership skills in a real-world arena. Plus, for some, their time at Philmont is one that changes their life.

The two most involved military academies are the Air Force Academy, in Colorado Springs, and the Naval Academy, in Annapolis.

The Air Force Academy pioneered the program in 1972 and has long held the closest relationship with Philmont for the program. Indeed, in 1980 General David Goldfein, who was Chief of Staff for the Air Force from 2016-2020, served as an Air Force Academy ranger.

Both the Air Force Academy and the Naval Academy send roughly 30 cadets or midshipmen each who serve as rangers and about six returning members who serve as the groups' ranger trainers. Once at the Ranch, they are taught and led by two service academy coordinators, a position within the Ranger Department that serves as a liaison between Philmont and the academies.

"It truly is their first opportunity to lead and inspire a group of people," said Kyle Knoll. Knoll served as a service academy coordinator from 2012-2018.

For the cadets and midshipmen, their three weeks at Philmont are part of a busy summer schedule that consists of many other trainings and responsibilities. Knoll said he has been told by many of the more than 450 Academy Rangers he has led over the years that Philmont was the most powerful leadership opportunity they experienced.

While in school and in their military careers, the cadets and midshipmen can depend on a chain of command that will be available to guide them out and away from mistakes.

However, at Philmont as rangers, they are often on their own. They are responsible for their crew in an austere wilderness setting, forcing them to make decisions and form a plan entirely on their own. The power of this experience holds great weight for these cadets and midshipmen of leadership.

Ben Haugh, a midshipman going into his junior year at the Naval Academy, served as a ranger this summer. Haugh went on a 12-day Philmont trek in 2017.

Leading people is something Haugh has always wanted to do, so attending the Naval Academy has been a dream come true. However, Haugh said he also wanted to return to Philmont. Being selected for this year's crop of academy rangers was an honor, Haugh said.

"Going out to Philmont and working with these Scouts is a very exciting and laid-back way to test out your leadership style," Haugh said.

# 50 Years of Academy Rangers

By Jarod Contreras

**“IT GETS INTO YOUR HEART. IT GETS INTO YOUR SOUL. IT BECOMES A PART OF WHO YOU ARE”**

Haugh admits that he spent his time on his own trek focusing on other things rather than being present at Philmont. When the opportunity to return this summer became a reality, he said he promised himself to journal, take more pictures, read, hike and to generally be present during his Philmont experience.

“Philmont is a sanctuary. That place is so precious, and it’s almost untouchable,” Haugh said.

Reminding Haugh’s crews of the importance of being present was a staple technique of his. Learning how to further develop your personal leadership style is a hallmark of the experience of any Philmont ranger. It is especially true for academy rangers who must return to an environment entirely built around leadership.

Haugh said one of the biggest lessons he learned from his time at Philmont was patience. He needed patience to reteach a topic time after time if participants were not understanding it, for example.

In the time he spent with the three crews he took out, Haugh said he realized the greatest privilege of his time as a ranger was the opportunity to teach crews more than just backpacking skills. He said he cherished the opportunity to share his perspective on college applications or on his favorite bands. Looking back on the three weeks Haugh spent on the Ranch, he said that he hopes to return one day, either on staff or as an advisor.

“Everybody comes together to protect the sacred ground

that is God’s country,” Haugh said.

The process of learning inherent to being a ranger applies to more than just those taking out crews. Stuart Hahn, this year’s service academy coordinator, said he is grateful for the impact the academy rangers have had on him. “It’s crazy as you’re training cadets and midshipmen how much they can change your life too,” Hahn said.

Hahn said the job is an important responsibility and one that doesn’t come without challenge. Given that the cadets and midshipmen are only at Philmont for three weeks at a time, Hahn said getting good at saying goodbye becomes an important skill for the coordinator.

“They’re kind of figuring it out, getting in their groove of how they want to teach the stuff to their crews and then they leave,” Hahn said.

However, Hahn said the sadness of those many goodbyes is balanced by the great pleasure of getting to see these cadets and midshipmen be shaped by Philmont.

The service academy program attracts both those who have been on trek at Philmont before and those who have never backpacked before. Hahn said getting to watch as these cadets and midshipmen learn that they’re capable of more than they thought they were is part of the magic of the job.

“Really, at the end of the three weeks or so that they’re here, they’re like, ‘this is the best small unit leadership that I’ve



Cadets from the Air Force Academy rest on the porch at Metcalf Station after a day of snowshoeing as part of a winter adventure program on March 25, 2021. Photo By Jack Rodgers.



Air Force Academy ranger trainer, Anna Fournaris, gives a trailhead talk instructing her crew on map and compass skills on July 11, 2022. Photo By Chase Ensz.

gotten in my time at the Academy,' and that says a lot about Philmont," Hahn said.

Robert Wettemann teaches history at the Air Force Academy. He is one of the coordinators of the program at the academy along with Col. Thomas Swaim. Wettemann echoes the impact that Philmont has on the cadets.

"[The cadets and midshipmen] all want to come back. Not all of them will be able to," Wettemann said.

Wettemann, who worked as a program counselor at Beaubien in 1992, said he sees the cadets fall in love with the Ranch, as so many who walk these lands do.

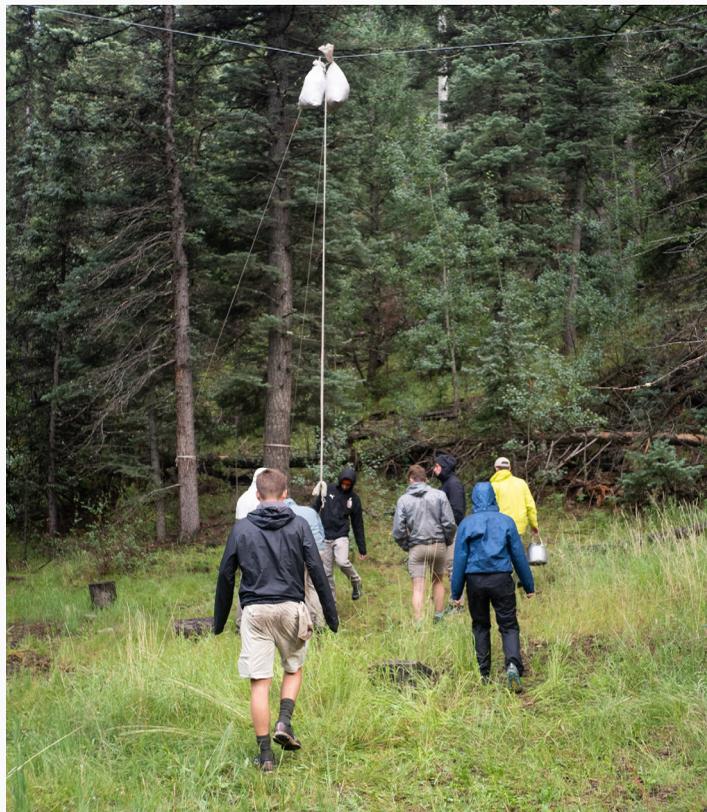
## **“EVERYBODY COMES TOGETHER TO PROTECT THE SACRED GROUND THAT IS GOD’S COUNTRY”**

"It gets into your heart. It gets into your soul. It becomes a part of who you are," Wettemann said.

For the 50 years that cadets and midshipmen from our country's military academies have been serving at Philmont Scout Ranch, it seems a common theme that echoes through the decades is the depth of impact that can be had in those three short weeks.

Haugh said it is important to remember the Jack London quote he thought of often while at Philmont.

"The proper function of man is to live, not to exist. I shall not waste my days in trying to prolong them. I shall use my time."



Service Academy Rangers raise bear bags during training trek on July 12, 2022. Photo By Chris Nye.

Fog rolls into  
Pueblano behind  
their flag pole on  
June 23, 2022. Photo  
By Emily Schmidt.



# READY. SET. GO.



**COOKS  
PEAK FIRE  
REINFORCES THE  
IMPORTANCE  
OF LAND  
MANAGEMENT**

By Jarod Contreras



**W**ith 140,000 acres of southwestern wilderness under the Ranch's watch, fire and Philmont are inextricably linked. These 140,000 acres have seen heavy human influence for more than 150 years, leaving forests packed too tightly with trees and a less than healthy ecosystem.

A matchbox that went up in flames in 2002 with the Ponil Complex Fire, in 2018 with the Ute Park Fire, and, most recently, just this past spring with the Cooks Peak Fire.

Wildfire in the American west is a common concern, but when the livelihood of many and the capacity to change lives depends on the health of these 140,000 acres, it becomes vital.

An air attack helicopter approaches Miami Lake to collect water to drop on the Cooks Peak Fire as the fire approached Abreu on April 24, 2022. Photo By Jack Rodgers.



Field manager, Ben Harper, poses for a portrait on July 13, 2022. Harper has worked at Philmont for 12 seasons and counting. Photo By Marielle Scott.

## PHILMONT PREPARES FOR COOKS PEAK FIRE

In recent years, Philmont has seen fire wreak havoc on summer seasons and the health of our forests. This year, it seemed like it would happen all over again. In the late afternoon of April 17, 2022, a fire stood up north of Ocate, New Mexico. It became known as the Cooks Peak Fire, and over the next few days strong winds pushed it forcefully to the north.

That week, Philmont Fire Department Chief James Sanchez and captain Jeremy Gruver were invited to a meeting where the Incident Management team responding to the fire illustrated what the fire was predicted to do. The consensus: it was going to hit Philmont.

During the truck ride back to the Ranch, Sanchez said he began to call everyone in the fire department. “We need you in at 6 a.m. tomorrow ready to go,” Sanchez said. He said the prediction made the immediacy of the fire clear and that it, “definitely put a worry in everybody.”

Philmont firefighters knew the stakes, and the next day, April 22, Sanchez said everyone was there early. Even department retirees from the community came out to help. “They knew it was important for them to be out there and do what they could,” Sanchez said.

That day, the team began to do a value assessment, where they decided which structures and resources were most important. The Ranch’s firefighters started strengthening Philmont’s road system to be a more effective firebreak to protect vital resources and hopefully prevent the fire from crossing too much into Philmont.

## COOKS PEAK FIRE BURNS 3,000 ACRES AT PHILMONT

However, the winds were unusual that weekend. Sanchez said typically winds that strong are followed by an advancing storm front. But not that weekend. That weekend, the winds pushed hard with a fire fueled by a very dry, very hot landscape. And the fire came to Philmont.

Sanchez said he was surprised with how quickly the fire crested the ridge above Rayado. Soon, it began to bear down hard on the valley below Urraca. “As soon as it crossed Rayado Road and started going up Toothache hill, up to Urraca,” Sanchez said this was the Ranch’s trigger point, “Philmont was evacuated.”

The Ranch evacuated on April 22. The fire moved across the ridge and down into the valley so quickly that, Sanchez said, no one knew Zastrow’s cabin burned until the next day. Despite the intensity of the burn, the teams on site continued to build firebreak lines and protect what structures they could.

The Ranching and Farm and Roads departments had concerns of their own: livestock. David Kenneke, Philmont’s Director of Ranching, said he remembers long days and nights that weekend hauling and driving cattle, horses and burros north, away from the fire.

The night of the evacuation, Kenneke said he and a handful of fellow employees from the Ranching, Farm and Roads, and Facilities Departments stayed behind to monitor the conditions of the fire. Kenneke described being ready to cut fence line in the bison pasture if the fire made it that far, so the bison herd could run for their own safety. “I remember being able to look into the

sun and it did not hurt my eyes. It was just a little orange dot,” Kenneke said.

The smoke in the air and the fire’s aggressiveness made for a weekend where many felt that Philmont was in deep trouble. They worried Cooks Peak may become another Ute Park and the Ranch would have to grapple with the consequences of another canceled summer.

However, sometimes life jumps directions on a dime. That weekend some moisture came, the winds changed and the response teams continued to work. Over the next few days, the conditions of the fire radically shifted in Philmont and the firefighters’ favor. It ceased its relentless push north. It provided the teams with opportunities to protect resources, like Philmont staff wrapping the Carson Meadows cabin in fire retardant sheets made from aluminum and fiberglass.

The fire did not die down immediately, and when it was all said and done it burned 3,084 acres of Philmont’s South Country. On May 14, the New Mexico Forestry Division determined the fire to be 100% contained.

For both Sanchez and Kenneke, one of the most memorable aspects of their experience with the Cooks Peak Fire is how proud they are of the work of their teams. “Whatever they had to do, they put it aside to help protect this ranch,” Sanchez said.

**“A LOT OF PEOPLE COUNT ON THE LAND HERE TO MAKE A LIVING, AND IF THE LAND ALL GOES, PEOPLE SUFFER”**

## PHILMONT LEADS THE WAY FOR INCIDENT COMMAND PARTNERSHIPS

Beyond the personnel directly on the fire, putting everything aside to do their part was a common theme for staff across the Ranch. The Philmont Training Center hosted a large-scale spike camp that housed several important incident command personnel responsible for coordinating the response to the fire. Wildland fire trucks, logistical tents and operations trailers lined the parking lots of the PTC.

Full-time and seasonal staff on-site volunteered to support the fire teams through serving meals, maintaining facilities and outfitting classrooms to serve the mission. Philmont’s IT Manager Clinton Pedigo described the importance of many hands making light work. “They were here to save the Ranch. What better way to give back than to volunteer your time,” Pedigo said.

The revolving incident command members were thankful for Philmont’s efforts. “Not only was Philmont able to provide and go above and beyond for us and the resources on this fire, the people were genuine, real and cared about us, making sure that we had what we needed. Anything they could do to help us, they would do,” said Chuck Fox, who ran operations and then took over as Incident Commander as the fire wound down.

## PHILMONT IS VITAL TO NORTHEAST NEW MEXICO

After Cooks Peak Fire, the burning of yet more thousands of acres and the loss of a cabin, the protection of this ranch was reinforced for many. “What has happened with these fires is traumatic, but the silver lining is that it opened people’s eyes that we need to be more aggressive with our land management,” Kenneke said.

Securing Philmont’s safety for generations to come is

“THE GOLDEN  
RULE IS THAT  
IF YOU TAKE  
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LAND WILL  
TAKE CARE OF  
YOU”

important for reasons far deeper than changing the lives of Scouts each summer. Kenneke noted, “much of the culture of Colfax County is interconnected with Philmont.” If Philmont were to go, Colfax County would bleed. “A lot of people count on the land here to make a living, and if the land all goes, people suffer,” Ben Harper, field manager for the Conservation Department, said.

Working to continue to improve the health of Philmont’s lands is a ranch-wide goal: from Kenneke in ranching, to Harper in conservation, to Sanchez in the fire department.

### IMPROVING EVACUATION PLANS

Sanchez reinforced the importance of access, that the fire department needs to be able to reach the fire. Which means, as Kenneke explained, Philmont’s goal to become a “leader in the education of land managers” requires continuing to improve the health of our forests, the quality of our roads and the conservation of water. Sanchez said that the South Country is their “area of concern ... not just this year but every year”. As such, evacuation is their number one priority. “We won’t worry about the fire until we get everybody out,” Sanchez said.

As drought conditions spurred extreme fire danger into the beginning of the summer season, Philmont established Divide Trail Camp as a point of communication for the South Country. Rangers staff the camp 24/7 to expedite spreading an evacuation message to the remote trail camps in the area.



**Top:** Philmont staff members survey a map of the terrain just south of Philmont’s border as the Hermits Peak and Calf Canyon Fires approach on May 13, 2022. Philmont Conservation Department members were tasked with developing a fuel break and machine line. Photo By Josh Zitko.

**Bottom:** Associate Director of Conservation of OATC, Benjamin Skidmore, fells a snag burned during the 2018 Ute Park Fire at Harlan on July 12, 2022. Snags are dead trees and pose a danger when left standing near trails or campsites due to the possibility of falling. Photo By Marielle Scott.

**Right:** The sun rises over the Cooks Peak burn scar on July 14, 2022. Photo By Marielle Scott.

Smoke from the Cooks Peak Fire descends on the Zastrow Trailhead on April 22, 2022. Photo By Jack Rodgers.



## IMPROVING THE HEALTH OF PHILMONT FORESTS

Since the 2018 Ute Park Fire, Philmont has increased its focus on forest fuel reduction, thinning the forests to form a healthier ecosystem. This focus will continue. During the fire, creating space between fuels was a key tactic. Kodee Summers, a seasonal staff member in the Conservation Department, worked on creating fuel breaks during the Cooks Peak Fire. “I think the most important thing was the land that we were on,” Summers said. Summers’ goal is to work as a wildland firefighter next summer, she said that experience gave her a wonderful introduction to the field.

As Kenneke explained, a key benefit of thinning, beyond better fire management, is that it provides better water management. Thinning allows water to hit the ground, as opposed to being suspended in canopies, thus allowing grasses to grow. These grasses protect against erosion and slow water down for absorption. Additionally, these grasses serve as feed for wild and domesticated animals. “Other than people, water is our most precious resource,” Kenneke said.

Going forward, Philmont hopes to increase its focus on prescribed burns, according to Conservation Director Lee Hughes. Prescribed burns are important for forest management because they provide the same benefit that human-performed thinning does, allowing the forest to be adequately spaced, allowing for adequate ground growth diversity and nutrient cycling, however they are

able to execute on a much larger scale than human-performed thinning.

“I envision a complex of burn units across the Ranch, with a few burned each year,” Hughes said. “More preparation is needed to get to this stage, and we’ll be prioritizing that work.” A goal for the Ranch, according to Hughes, is to increase opportunities for training and certifications so that staff can continue to be an asset to northeastern New Mexico.

In the near future, Hughes explained that Philmont has “contracted a burn boss to write a plan and execute burn units at Demo Forest, near Abreu turnaround and on north Tooth Ridge once some additional work is done there. We have identified other sites to add to the list, including the Beaubien Road shaded fuel break and a potential site near Lower Bonito canyon.”

All this work will play a vital role in continuing to safeguard Philmont’s future. Kenneke pointed out that “every animal alters the environment.” When ants burrow a thousand tunnels to form an ant hill, they are altering their environment. “Man is no different,” Kenneke said. Going forward, Kenneke reinforced that, “what we need to do is be responsible in our altering.”

Many at Philmont count their lucky stars that the Cooks Peak Fire wasn’t more devastating. However, it has left an impact. It served as a potent, timely reminder that Philmont has work to do, that we’ve done good work already, but that we still have work to do. “The golden rule is that if you take care of the land, the land will take care of you,” Kenneke said.





# A Scout is **Helpful...**

Philmont Scout Ranch crews render aid after their Amtrak train derailed in Missouri

By Monica Dunn



# “NO ONE WANTS TO USE THESE SKILLS, BUT I’M SURE GLAD THE SCOUTS AND LEADERS WERE THERE AND PREPARED TO ACT”

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**P**hilmont Crews 619-7D 1 and 2 departed Philmont Scout Ranch on Sunday, June 26th after a 7-day trek to return home on the Amtrak train out of Raton, New Mexico. Both crews are from Appleton, Wisconsin, and include 16 youth and 8 adults from Boy Scout Troops 12 and 73.

The crew’s Amtrak train, Southwest Chief 4, was traveling eastbound, from Los Angeles to Chicago, when it derailed Monday afternoon after striking a dump truck in Mendon, Missouri.

“In true Scouting fashion, the Scouts rendered aid to their fellow passengers before they worried about anything for themselves,” said Scott Armstrong, Director of National Media Relations for the Boy Scouts of America.

One of the Scouts located the driver of the dump truck who had been ejected and was lying in a nearby ditch. He provided first aid and comfort before the driver died from his injuries.

Reports show in the immediate aftermath of the derailling, the two crews broke windows and helped pull people out. They also used their advanced first-aid training to help injured passengers before first responders arrived.

First responders transported two of the adult crew advisors to the hospital for medical attention with what Armstrong described as non-life-threatening injuries. These injuries included broken bones, ribs and a punctured lung. Along with the two adults, two Scouts also went to the hospital.

Troop 73 Scoutmaster Dan Skrypczak said six Scouts and four adult leaders from the two troops stayed back to help the situation.

“They helped other people, other individuals from the train on backboards to the ambulance,” Skrypczak said. “Almost all of them have earned the emergency preparedness merit badge and first-aid merit badge.”

In addition to those merit badges earned, Philmont requires two members of each crew to be certified in Wilderness First Aid and CPR. Between these two crews, six members are certified.

“It’s impressive to see that our Scouts utilize the skills that prepare them for a Philmont Wilderness First Aid situation in an emergency crisis and response event,” said Roger Hoyt, General Manager of Philmont Scout Ranch. “No one wants to use these skills, but I’m sure glad the Scouts and leaders were there and prepared to act.”

The crews finished their 7-day trek on Saturday after hiking more than 30 rugged and challenging miles across Philmont’s backcountry while participating in programming such as horseback riding, blacksmithing, muzzle-loading rifle shooting, rock climbing and completing conservation projects.

“Philmont is proud of the heroic efforts of the Scouts from Crews 619-7D 1 and 2,” said Hoyt. “They exemplify the Scout Oath, Law and servant leadership through their actions.”

PTC kids and families  
climb at the Philmont  
Training Center climbing  
wall on July 13, 2022.  
Photo By Chase Ensz.

# Kids and Kin

By Andreanna  
Haritopoulos



The Family Adventure  
Camp Small Fries visit the  
Pony Barn at the Philmont  
Training Center on June 28,  
2022. Photo By Ryan Moore.

# PTC Family Programs bring back adventure, quality time for conference attendees

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**T**he Philmont Training Center has often been described as “the best-kept secret in Scouting”. Nestled on the opposite side of the road away from the hustle and bustle of crews at Camping Headquarters, it offers a Philmont magic unique for its own programming experiences.

Though well-renowned for its world-class learning opportunities for Scouting volunteers and professionals, the PTC became a location open to people of all ages who want to experience the beauty of the New Mexican frontier through its renewed conference spouse and youth programs.

Last summer season, the traditional family programs were removed, and conference attendee families participated in BSA Family Adventure Camp. They selected their own activities to participate in as a family unit, according to PTC Associate Director, Maddy Houk.

“Our vision is to provide a premier environment for learning, playing, relaxing and creating lifetime friendships,” Houk said. “So, after a period of restructuring and receiving a lot of feedback that people wanted to see these programs back at the PTC, we decided to bring them back in addition to our Family Adventure Camp program. Now we run both programs simultaneously.”

This year, family programming is back and better than ever. The new “Kids and Kin” program is designed to give individuals an unforgettable adventure at Philmont while their family members participate in PTC conferences.

Participants ranging in age from infants to 18 years old and beyond can engage in a variety of planned activities including shooting sports, climbing wall and high ropes course, craft center, fly fishing, hiking in the backcountry, taking museum tours, horseback riding and more.

After the day’s conference activities are over, the evenings are devoted to family activities and free time, often accompanied by some type of entertainment presented by PTC staff. The Greensward on the PTC lawn is the heart of these events, from dummy cattle-roping on western night to a send-off barbecue at the end of the program week.

One of the central parts of this new programming is that it reassures conference guests that their children are well-taken care of and kept busy throughout the week. The Silverado program provides an opportunity for conference spouses to experience the amenities of the Ranch with other adults as well.

“This week has been great. I love it out here, and I love hiking. So, this program is perfect for that. I can do what I want while my family is doing other things,” Amy Devenport, a Week Six Silverado participant, said. “Things have certainly changed over the years since I’ve been coming here but never for the worse.”

Last summer season, youth of all age groups were at times grouped together for program while their parents were occupied with leadership training and meetings. Though there were some benefits to this style of programming, second-year program counselor George Reisinger is happy to have the current style of age-group separation in place.

“I like this year for the opportunity to have more quality time with the kids in their separate age groups,” Reisinger said.

Program counselors not only keep children occupied while their parents are away and enjoying their own Philmont activities but also show youth opportunities available across the Ranch. This leadership is key to embracing the culture of Philmont and connecting Training Center activities to the BSA Ideals.

“In working with the younger ones, you get to nurture the spirit of what they may see their older brothers or sisters doing out on a trek,” Reisinger said. “That can make them want to come back as a participant or even staff later on, which is what PTC is all about.”

By providing access to the backcountry and other memory-making opportunities across the Ranch for people of all ages, the Kids and Kin Program is a unique way to expose those who may have just come along for the ride to the magic of Philmont.

Schedules and sign-ups for next year’s conferences, Kids and Kin program and Family Adventure Camp have no official release date, but prospective participants can expect to see itineraries released in the Fall of 2022.

# Women. Scouts. Trailblazers.

The first all-female OATC trek makes history at Philmont Scout Ranch

By Sarah Wettemann  
Photos by Marielle Scott

A group of young women made history when they stepped on the trail on June 27, 2022 as crew 627-OA-1, the first all-female Order of the Arrow Trail Crew trek. They started their adventure on the side of Mount Phillips, building trail for a week, before traveling further into Philmont's backcountry for their trek week. But the journey of women in OATC at Philmont did not start with crew 627-OA-1. Three years ago, Emma Penczek and Hannah Stuart became the first female Order of the Arrow Trail Crew foremen.

"I remember at the end of the summer [of 2018] when I was filling out my application for 2019," Penczek said. "I called my dad, and I was like, 'hey, I think I know what I want to be next year.' And he's like 'oh, you want to be a ranger?' And I said 'no, I want to be an OA Trail Crew foreman.' And he basically laughed at me and said 'no, that's not going to happen. They're not going to allow females.'"

The summer of 2019 was the first time girls came to Philmont as members of Scouts BSA and Order of the Arrow. For young women, conversations with their brothers and friends after their treks was the only exposure many girls had to OATC.

"I had this mindset of we're moving the BSA forward. We have female Eagle Scouts, and they're allowed to join the OA," Penczek said. "Why is it that these females aren't allowed to go on this trek that I hear is so amazing and so life-changing?"

The summer of 2019 not only had

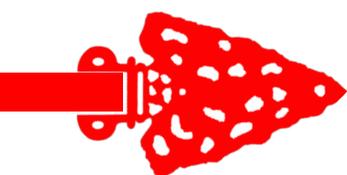
the first female foremen but participants as well. Christiane Fletcher had heard about OATC years prior but never thought she would get to experience it firsthand. When the Order of the Arrow opened to girls, Fletcher immediately held elections within her venturing crew to begin the process of joining the OA and becoming eligible for OATC.

Fletcher completed her OATC experience as one of two female participants in 2019 and could only hope for the day of an all-female OATC crew. She returned to Philmont as a foreman in 2021 after COVID-19 prevented the ranch from opening in 2020. As a foreman, Fletcher didn't have an opportunity to lead any co-ed crews but was able to interact with female participants during the work week.

"We never thought last year that we'd have an all-female crew within the next five years or so," Fletcher said. "But here we are, and it's just been so nice to see all these girls going through their ordeal, getting involved and getting all these leadership positions within the OA."

But joining Scouting and the Order of the Arrow did not come without obstacles for both Fletcher and other members of the crew. Since joining a Scout troop in 2019, Jessica Parker has faced adversity and discrimination but has not let it deter her from Scouting.

"I think at the beginning, it was to prove a point that girls belong," Parker said. "But the more time that you spend trying to prove to that one individual it's like, 'why am I trying to prove one person wrong when



Caitlyn Olivia rests her additional two troop patches on her arm during the OATC Banquet on July 10, 2022. Visiting Philmont Scout Ranch was Olivia's third stop this summer after also participating at Northern Tier and Sea Base.

there are so many people who want me here?”

Parker is not the only one in the crew to experience discrimination during her time in Scouting, but the shared experiences only brought the crew closer.

“A lot of us sometimes think we’re the only ones going through those certain situations,” Parker said. “We feel alone in that sense, but the more time that you spend with girls in Scouts, the more you realize you’re not the only one who’s gone through it. There’s that kind of bond in how we’ve gotten through it.”

Throughout their OATC experience, the women of 627-OA-1 were able to take their mutual experiences and similar backgrounds and learn from each other. Dellaney Flower joined Scouting when she was in seventh grade, and the trek was one of the first times she had older female Scouts to learn from.

Despite being the youngest member of the crew, Flower is the oldest member of her troop. She has learned the importance of sharing her experiences with younger Scouts and how to motivate them to move beyond hardships.

“Don’t be small,” Flower said. “It’s kind of hard to be the little kid coming up. Even here, I was the youngest one, and I was ready to prove myself. I think it’s important that they are allowed to just be here. They don’t need to prove themselves.”

While learning from each other, the young women grew together and became a team throughout their work and trek weeks. After seven days of trail building on the side of Mount Phillips, they hiked 75 miles during their trek week, culminating in summiting Baldy Mountain.

“I think anyone can walk up there,” Flower said. “It was kind of the peak of the week because we’d been walking towards it all week. We could see it in the distance and to finally get there all together and to be the first ones up there ... it was cool to finally reach that goal together.”

Summiting Baldy Mountain was not only the peak of their trek but also a culmination of their Scouting experiences. By coming together as an all-female crew and completing an OATC trek they inspired themselves and the next generations of young women in Order of the Arrow.

“Taking the time to reflect as an individual and then as a crew definitely opens up the eyes of many groups of people to realize women belong in this program,” Parker said. “Women are more than capable of doing what young men have been doing for years in this program, and to see a collective group of women doing the exact same thing, I’m definitely very proud of that. It’s very rewarding.”





**Far Left:** From left, foreman KT Pyzowski, Dellaney Flower, Madison Schwab, Caitlyn Olivia, Jessica Parker, Macy K., Ashton Adamick, and foreman Christiane Fletcher.

**Left:** Jessica Parker poses for a portrait during the OATC Banquet on July 10, 2022. Parker has extensive involvement with Philmont, including a participation in NAYLE at the beginning of the summer season.

**Top:** OATC participants line up at the end of a trail building day on Mt Phillips on June 30, 2022. Week one of OATC is work week where participants build trail. Week two is trek week where participants hike through the backcountry.

**Bottom:** OATC foreman, Christiane Fletcher, right, instructs Dellaney Flower, left, and Jessica Parker, middle, to remove a boulder from the trail to Mt Phillips on June 30, 2022. This summer, OATC participants have completed 2,400 feet of trail, including two switchbacks.



# The Magic of The Rayado

By Jarod Contreras  
Photos By Marielle Scott

**T**he magic of Philmont is a tale told by time and memory: time marked by countless footsteps along our trails and the memory marked by how the footsteps linger. It is the many footsteps through our lands that matter. The land is the cup that holds the ocean of growth found in the hiking, the people and the history. The land is what is beheld in awe. This land holds the power to change lives, and perhaps that is the most magical aspect of Philmont Scout Ranch.

That magic can be found in the grandeur of a sunset over the Tooth of Time or in fields of grass playing gently with the wind. It is a magic found in everything from the summits of our tallest peaks to the caterpillars found at the bottom of our deepest canyons.

Philmont is a land that has been lived on and loved by humans for thousands of years. That connection is easily recognized when visiting the petroglyphs at Indian Writings or the mines at Baldy Town. The story of Philmont is tied to connections to the land. And, that story can be found everywhere on the Ranch but can especially be encountered along the Rayado Creek.

Running from Clear Creek to Rayado, the Rayado Creek forms an important watershed and thoroughfare through Philmont's South Country. In search of some of that magic, I traversed the length of the Rayado within Philmont's bounds. Beginning at Clear Creek, I hiked along trails, the creekside and

backcountry roads until Rayado. When it was all said and done, the journey brought me along the path of crews with hearty hellos, the hospitality of staff camps and the majesty of our land. But, as most journeys do, this walk began much simpler than that.

At Clear Creek, a fur trapping interpretive staff camp, the Rayado enters through Philmont's property line in a small trickle. Not insignificant but not yet to the roaring power one finds at Fish Camp or Rayado. Surrounding that trickle is vibrant, verdant life. Ferns and grasses bask in golden rays, while ponderosas stand guard over the lifeblood of so much life down the valley

To begin my hike, I held a handful of creek soil in my hands. Rolling it between my palms, I brought it to my nose. The powerful aromas of the earth filled my nostrils, a way to center myself into the journey ahead. The smell of butterscotch wafting from the ponderosas and the sight of the sun playing across the water brought me into the moment and readied me for the walk.

As you head down the valley from Clear Creek, you continue to find bountiful life. Valleys painted by lush grasses and vaulted by tree crowns, aspens and ponderosas.

A common reminder along the valley is of the power of nature. Walking under the shade of strong, living trees, you sometimes suddenly come into the light as you stumble upon hundreds of blowdowns. Behemoths weighing thousands of pounds thrown carelessly by the wind across the hillside. It is a



sobering moment, bringing the give and take of the wilderness to the top of mind.

As you drop into Phillips Junction, a commissary staff camp, you find the valley closing in. Heading into Fish Camp you are treated to the beauty of a high-country canyon filled with life. The sunset made it especially beautiful as I hiked it. As the sun dipped below the ridgelines, the canyon took on an otherworldly glow, a sublime entrance into an evening at Fish Camp.

Once Waite Phillips' fishing lodge, Fish Camp is now a fly-fishing interpretive staff camp with historic buildings restored to the time of Phillips and his friends.

The culture of the backcountry is driven by the hospitality of the staff, and Fish Camp was no exception. In fact, they were a shining example.

Upon my arrival, I was graciously invited to sleep in one of their cabins and offered nachos and pecan pie for dinner. Surrounded by like-minded people, with good food to eat and a storied cabin to sleep in, my evening at Fish Camp reminded me why the summer backcountry at Philmont is so magnificent.

The magnificence was reinforced by an early morning wakeup to a nearly full moon, soon transforming into specks of sunlight peeking over ridgelines. The moon and the sun kept me company as I headed downstream. Following social trails for fly fishing, I kept close to the creekside.



I heard the growing roar of the water as it crashed through a closing canyon. Soon, though, the canyon itself began to present a problem. As the walls became steeper and the water faster, there became less room for me to hike on the banks. As much as I wanted to tie myself to the creek, I had to move uphill.

After fits and starts, poking at different parts of the canyon's face, I committed to an uphill space and emerged onto the trail. While the banks had been beautiful, hiking in a clear direction on a trail was a needed reprieve.

As I made my way along, cliff-faced vistas opened before me, clouds danced above me and the wind blew gently. Of all the experiences at Philmont, moments that allow gratitude to simmer over into big smiles and happy steps are some of the most powerful.

In an effort to find more of that power, I headed back into the canyon through Craggs, a trail camp.

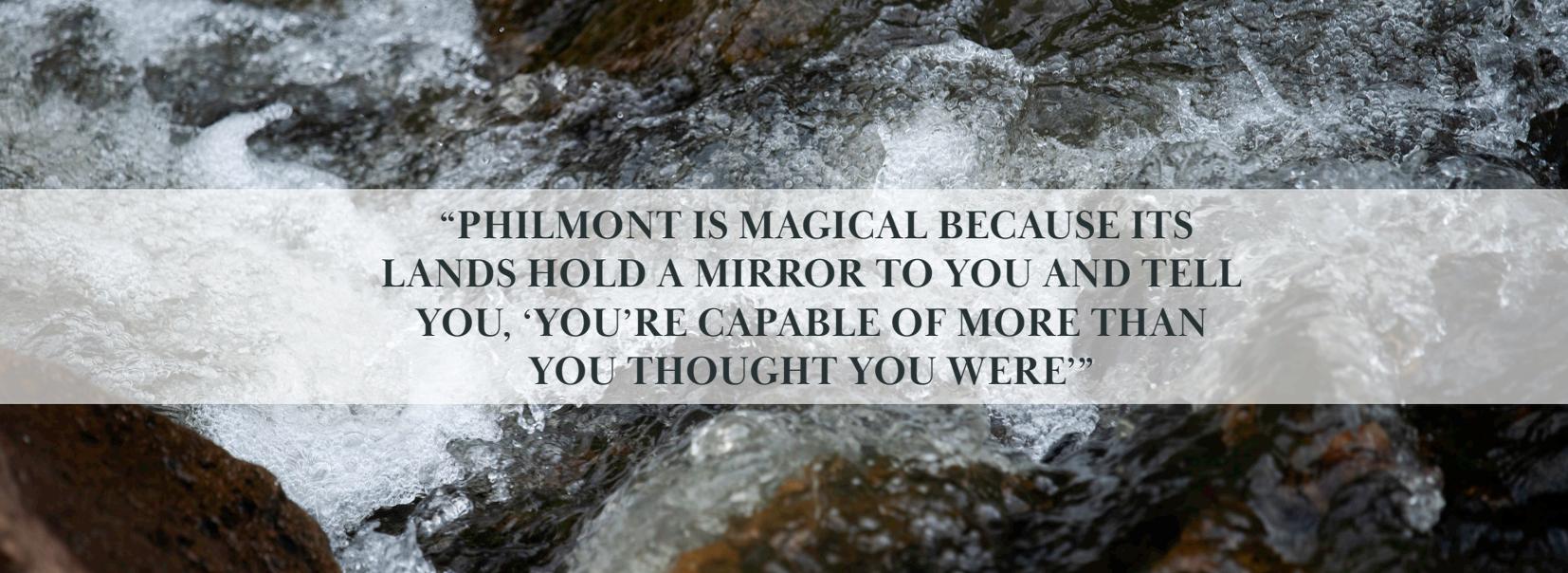
Above Craggs, the trail stays high up on the ridgeline to Carson Meadows, a search and rescue and star gazing staff camp. The Rayado flows through its canyon, undisturbed by trail traffic.

A grade requiring hands and feet to ascend, it was made especially challenging by fallen trees and unstable rocks. With frequent breaks, rests required leaning into the hillside so as not to fall backward with the weight of my pack.

Huffing and puffing up that canyon wall was a sobering experience. It reminded me of the difficulty of traversing this land before an extensive trail network, the work and struggle the miners and loggers must have endured. However, most of the ascent was spent in abject discomfort as opposed to reflection. Eventually, and I do mean eventually, I emerged with hands on knees onto the trail, high above the creek.

The vista provided a reprieve as I sat and recovered my energy. But soon, it was time to move on. I still had a long way to go. As the trail took me into Old Abreu trail camp, the temperatures rose, the trees became smaller and the plains opened up before me. The creek had entered a new ecosystem, and the heat lamp had been turned on.

Midday hiking in Philmont's less than shady areas is



**“PHILMONT IS MAGICAL BECAUSE ITS  
LANDS HOLD A MIRROR TO YOU AND TELL  
YOU, ‘YOU’RE CAPABLE OF MORE THAN  
YOU THOUGHT YOU WERE”**

Unless, like me, you're trying to experience the creek and insist on hiking next to it. Well, sometimes insistence comes at a price.

There along the Rayado is a jumble of fallen trees, growing saplings and thick brush. Passage through is made even more difficult by a water system that cannot seem to make a decision on where it wants to go, splitting and twisting wildly.

After what seemed like hours of progress, I checked my map and realized I had not made it that far at all. Maybe an eighth of the total distance I needed to travel to reach Old Abreu trail camp. It was disappointing, to say the least.

However, in my determination, or stubbornness, I decided to keep pushing through the bush. As I continued, I added to my already countless crisscrossing of the Rayado and looked ahead at a closing canyon, steeper walls and faster water.

In one last ditch effort, I removed my boots, rolled up my pants and attempted to walk through the creek itself. I did not bring sandals, which made the walk less than ideal barefoot.

After not much progress was made, I laced my boots back up, shouldered my pack and looked to the ridgeline. I had changed my plan. Instead of hiking along the creek, I would once again ascend to the ridgeline in search of the trail. However, this ascent promised to be considerably more difficult.

notoriously difficult, and my experience was no different. From Abreu, a homesteading interpretive staff camp, to Rayado, I had a long, hot and slow hike. Slogging through a burning sun and little breeze, I thought often of the vastly different lands the journey had taken me on: lush, high-country valleys, historic cabins, tight canyons, oak groves and plains. Land all chained together into a common experience by the Rayado itself.

The journey even took me around the burn scar of the Cooks Peak Fire, another sobering reminder of nature's power. When water flows through a recent burn such as this, the risk for flash floods drastically increases. It is for this reason that waterways in burn scars should be avoided and only approached out of necessity.

The power of nature was extant throughout the entire journey. As I walked into Rayado and touched the opposing fence line to the one that had started the journey, I did so with pointed gratitude. While the difficult parts, canyon wall ascents and high temperatures, were challenging in the moment, in hindsight they form some of my favorite memories of the journey. And, that is perhaps what I realized most from my journey along the Rayado Creek: Philmont is magical because its lands hold a mirror to you and tell you, “you're capable of more than you thought you were.”

# Rocks Ore Minerals

Sheila Park



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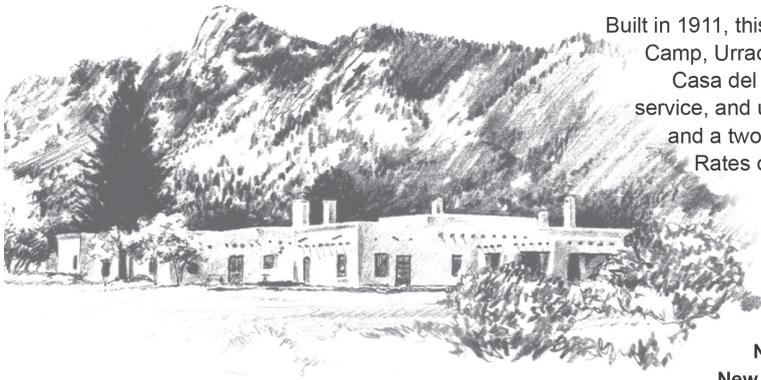
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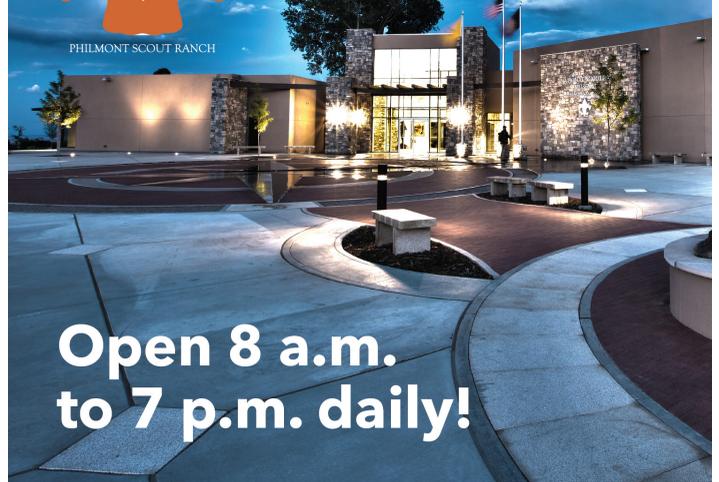
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## ABOUT THE BACK COVER

### “EAST OF THE SUN & WEST OF THE MOON”

To commemorate the 50th anniversary of women in the ranger Department, artist Jeff Segler took to recreating his 1981 “I Wanna Go Back” painting for a new generation. With former ranger Katie Nagib modeling, the painting is inspired by Norman Rockwell’s “Rosie the Riveter” and aspects of Michelangelo’s work in the Sistine chapel. Under the ranger’s boots one can see book titles covering the history of the area. Additionally, the last names of Kathy Leach and Nancy Wells, Philmont’s first two women rangers, can also be found. The painting was revealed in person during the 2022 Philmont Staff Association reunion.



PHILMONT SCOUT RANCH  
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THE CHASES OF CIMARRON  
Beyond the Hills  
EAST OF THE SUN AND WEST OF THE MOON KAY NIELSEN EP-BHS  
AT THE END OF THE SANTA FE TRAIL

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